

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2007

Secretary Dirk Kempthorne
NPS Director Mary Bomar
NPS Regional Director Mike Snyder
Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Suzanne Lewis
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne, Director Bomar, Regional Director Snyder, and Superintendent Lewis,

We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts on the recently released Sylvan Pass Operational Risk Management Assessment. This assessment will play a key role in the National Park Service's (NPS) soon to be released Winter Use Plan for Yellowstone National Park (YNP) and Grand Teton National Park (GTNP). While we are concerned about some of the statements by NPS officials that have accompanied the release of this document, we are particularly pleased that the assessment makes clear that the avalanche risks on Sylvan Pass can be mitigated with artillery as has been occurring for years. This mitigation should allow for continued winter access through YNP's East Entrance.

Throughout the debate on the issue of winter use in YNP, we have actively participated in discussions about the closure of the East Entrance. We have shared our comments during the public comment period and in private discussions with NPS officials. It continues to be our view that the East Entrance of YNP should remain open and that it can be done so safely.


During all of our discussions, you have continually assured both us and the citizens of Park County that the potential decision to close the East Entrance of YNP would be based solely on the issue of employee safety. Time and time again, we were told the decision to close the East Entrance would not be based on funding. Therefore, we are troubled by the apparent back peddling of the NPS officials who recently suggested that funding will now play a key role in the determination of this issue.

We are concerned that, by mentioning funding, the NPS is simply looking for another excuse to close the East Entrance. Instead of looking for reasons to limit access to YNP, we encourage you to look for ways to keep access open. As soon as we can get a definitive answer that the East Entrance will be open for the winter season, use will go up dramatically.

Thank you again for allowing us to share our concerns. We look forward to the forthcoming release of a winter use plan that keeps the East Entrance open for business and recreation users alike.

Sincerely,


Michael B. Enzi
United States Senator


John Barrasso
United States Senator


Barbara Cubin
Member of Congress

Cc: Governor Freudenthal